



“Lean” is the most recent, most successful version of process improvement and has its roots in the work of Edwards Deming and other “quality” pioneers. Developed by Toyota and widely adopted in the private sector, the power of Lean is now being brought to bear in government to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Boeing, Group Health, and Virginia Mason are merely the most notable Seattle-area companies who have improved performance using Lean.

Using the Lean toolkit makes the County’s processes more efficient and productive. Lean works because it is based on commonsense, go-to-the-source principles:

- **Ask the customer.** Define value from the customer’s perspective.
- **Go to the place where the work is actually done,** see the work being done, talk with the people who do the work.
- **Make problems visible and welcome them;** treat problems as opportunities to make improvements.

• **Eliminate non-value-added activities.** Target “waste,” such as waiting, over-processing, motion, inventory, and defects.

• **Respect people.** Value the knowledge and ideas of those closest to customers and the work itself.

King County is moving forward with Lean because of the growing gap between costs and revenues. The County needs more capacity to produce as much public value as possible within constrained resources. The County needs to reclaim existing capacity by replacing non-value-adding activities with more value-adding activities.

SHERIFF’S OFFICE: The Sheriff’s Office overtime budget was exceeded by over \$1 million in 2011. Delving into “why?” revealed that staffing levels were not sustainable given reductions in positions due to annexations and budget reductions. The Lean event pivoted from the patrol staffing process to larger questions of structure and deployment. The Team landed on “Zone Policing,” which transformed four self-contained precincts into three zones across which deputies could “slide” to meet staffing needs. Other changes included:

- co-locating in municipal facilities where contract work was done, allowing the County to close expensive precinct buildings;
- overlapping shifts that focus resources when demand is highest; and
- changing response protocols.

Early reports from this implementation indicate that overtime costs are down, staffing is taking much less time, and public safety outcomes are being maintained. Overtime savings are anticipated to be included in the 2013 Budget.

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES:

Months could go by before a single family residential permit was issued, more time than in other jurisdictions in the region. The team’s improvements included reducing the number of queues where the application has to wait from nine to three, standardizing so that many fewer custom reviews are required, and using teams to quickly process applications instead of sending them through a lengthy step-by-step chain of people. Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) hopes that the progress made on this permit, which is one of the most important to DDES, will provide a template for many of the 70 other DDES permitting processes. Eleven permits have been piloted through the new process. The piloted permits took an average of 21 days of DDES processing time, compared to 42 days before, and an average of 28 calendar days to permit issuance, compared to 79 days before.

ELECTIONS: The way Elections had been verifying signatures was unnecessarily complex and subjective determinations resulted in the need for multiple exception processes. Delays and the need for rework caused frustration for everyone in the process, including voters. The Lean teams adopted a new verification standard, collapsed 10 paper forms into one electronic database, physically rearranged the space and flow, and changed training and materials. The 2012 Primary Election was the first opportunity to test all of the Lean changes on “live” ballots. Initial test data indicate that all goals for speeding ballot processing have been met or exceeded.



Lean Projects In Planning:

**Superior Court: Juvenile
Probation Social Files**

Jail Health: Psychiatric Intake

**Public Health: Women,
Infants and Children
Work Flow**

**Solid Waste:
Contract Review**

**Elections: Voter Services
and Registration**

King County Lean Projects as of September, 2012

Records and Licensing Services: Mail-In License Renewals
April, 2011

Records and Licensing Services: For-Hire License Applications
July, 2011

Executive Office: Legislation Submittal
August, 2011

Human Resources Division: Employee-Initiated Reclassification
September, 2011

Records and Licensing Services: In-person License Renewals
November, 2011

Sheriff's Office: Patrol Staffing
December, 2011

RALS: Location of New Animal Services Laundry Facility
December, 2011

**Facilities Management, Natural Resources & Parks,
and Transportation:** Special Use Permitting
February, 2012

Department of Community and Human Services:
Contract Consolidation
March, 2012

Development and Environmental Services:
Single Family Permitting
March, 2012

Elections: Signature Verification
March, 2012

Elections: Ballot Processing
May, 2012

Transit and HRD: FMLA Data
May 8-14, 2012

DAJD: Background Security Screening
May 29–June 4, 2012

Transit and Human Resources Division: Workers Compensation
June, 2012

Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention and the Courts:
Pre-Trial Release
August, 2012

Public Health - Seattle & King County:
Clinic Moves and Family Planning Work Flow
August, 2012

Wastewater: Engineering Design Review
September, 2012

Public Health - Seattle & King County: Inventory Work Flow
September 2012

Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention: Policy Development
September 2012

Road Division: Asset Management Data Collection
September 2012